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## **DR. EDWARD O. WILSON NAMED HONORARY CHAIR OF MASSACHUSETTS BIODIVERSITY DAYS 2003**

*Renowned biologist and "Father of Biodiversity"  
to participate in May 31 event at Blue Hills Reservation*

Secretary of Environmental Affairs Ellen Roy Herzfelder today announced that Dr. Edward O. Wilson, the preeminent biological theorist and writer, has agreed to serve as Honorary Chair of the 2003 Biodiversity Days celebration in Massachusetts. Dr. Wilson, who is Pellegrino University Research Professor Emeritus at Harvard University, will join Secretary Roy Herzfelder and other state environmental officials for a "BioBlitz" at the Blue Hills Reservation on Saturday, May 31, 2003.

"We are delighted and honored that Dr. Wilson is serving as our Honorary Chair of this important event," said Secretary Roy Herzfelder. "He is one of the world's most eminent scientists, and perhaps more than anyone else on earth, has taught us what it means to be a part of the community of living things."

"Massachusetts has become one of the leaders in drawing the public into the vital task of understanding and preserving our native biodiversity – the vast wealth of living things that can be discovered here in New England," said Dr. Wilson. "It is a great pleasure to be part of an initiative whose goal is to nurture the public constituency that will be essential to the protection of this natural diversity and our biological heritage for future generations," he added.

Biodiversity Days 2003, which is scheduled to take place from Friday, May 30 through Sunday, June 8, will involve tens of thousands of people in hundreds of cities and towns across the Commonwealth. The focus this year is on 15 "BioBlitzes" – intense, expert-led inventories of the number and variety of species living in specific natural communities – which will be held around the state. More information on these "BioBlitzes" is available at [www.biodiversitydays.net](http://www.biodiversitydays.net). The Blue Hills event is co-sponsored by the Neponset River Watershed Association, the Friends of the Blue Hills, and the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC). The MDC manages the Blue Hills Reservation that spans more than 7,000 acres of Quincy, Milton, Canton, Randolph, and Braintree.

Hosted by the state's Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, Biodiversity Days 2003 is sponsored by 10 nature-oriented groups and environmental nonprofits, and coordinated by nine regional organizers. In addition to the BioBlitzes, regional organizers are hosting more than a hundred nature walks and field trips all across the state over the next two months. These walks are appropriate for experts and beginners alike. An interactive list of trips is posted at [www.biodiversitydays.net](http://www.biodiversitydays.net). The Biodiversity Days celebration enables thousands of nature-curious citizens to become better acquainted with the natural world while gathering important data about the species they identify.

In 2000, Massachusetts became the first state in the nation to sponsor a broad-scale, citizen-directed species inventory and remains the only state that draws upon citizen-generated data to build a database of species and their habitats. The web site [www.biodiversitydays.net](http://www.biodiversitydays.net) provides this information directly to all members of the public, including land-use decision makers and conservationists. Last year's event involved more than 280 communities and featured over 800 nature walks. Participants identified and recorded 2,241 distinct species.

Each year, Biodiversity Days engages thousands of new naturalists in learning about the component species native to Massachusetts. These naturalists help to develop a useful and accessible species database that can be applied to conservation decision-making at both state and local levels.

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Dr. Edward O. Wilson is the author of 22 books, two of which – *On Human Nature* (1978) and *The Ants* (1990, co-authored with Bert Hölldobler) – have won the Pulitzer Prize. He has written over 370 articles, most for scientific journals, and received 27 honorary doctoral degrees and 75 awards in international recognition for his contributions to science and humanity. His latest book, *Pheidole in the New World: A Dominant, Hyperdiverse Ant Genus*, was published in January of this year. *The Future of Life*, an eloquent argument for protecting earth's biodiversity, came out in 2002.